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POLITICAL PORTRAITS WITH PEN AND PENCIL.

WILLIAM DARRAH KELLEY. 1814-1890

The subject of our biographical notice for this month, is widely known as an active, energetic and radical member of the great Democratic party; while in his own immediate sphere of action, he is also universally recognized as an ardent friend of humanity, a zealous collaborator in every effort for the elevation of the laboring community, and a helper in every good work. We commend his history to the younger portion of our readers as an example of the manner in which, under the operation of our free institutions, talent, honor and industry, will secure for their possessor his appropriate position, by their own force, against all disadvantages, and without a resort either to the patronage of the influential, or the arts of the demagogue. Let the young man of intellect and industry learn from its recital that there is a path open for him also to reputation and fortune, in which he may walk freely, and still keep his fair fame unspotted to the end.

William Darrah Kelley was born in the Northern Liberties of Philadelphia in the spring of 1814. His paternal family was from Salem county, New-Jersey; his grandfather, Major John Kelley, having served throughout the revolutionary war, and at its close retired to his farm in that county. His son David Kelley, the father of the subject of this memoir, inherited from him a small estate, but early removed to Philadelphia, where he followed the business of a watchmaker and jeweller, and where he married Miss Hannah Darrah, a lady of Bucks county, Pennsylvania, who is still living at an advanced age under the hospitable roof of her now prosperous son. Mr. Kelley fell into pecuniary difficulties during the financial troubles that accompanied the close of the war of 1812–15, principally in consequence of the too common folly of endorsing the paper of others. His business was broken up, and he was stripped of his worldly possessions. He soon afterwards died, leaving his family in very straitened circumstances, when William, who was the youngest of the children, was but two years old.

His mother, thus left with a dependent family of three daughters and a son, succeeded in maintaining herself reputably, and bringing up her children creditably. Her son was sent to a neighboring school until eleven years of age, when he left it finally, with only the rudiments of an ordinary English education—the rest being left to his own exertions. He served for some time as errand boy in a bookstore, and afterwards entered the office of Jasper Harding, of the Pennsylvania Inquirer, as copy-reader, where he remained until his fourteenth year. He then apprenticed himself to the firm of Rickards & Dubosq, manufacturing jewellers, until twenty years of age, leaving the shelter of his mother's roof, and taking up his residence in the family of Mr. Dubosq, where he continued until the expiration of his term of ap-

prenticeship. During this period he felt keenly the deficiencies of his early education, and sought to remedy it by reading. Books being difficult of access, he united with a number of his companions to found the Youth's Library, afterwards called the Pennsylvania Literary Institute, which accumulated a library of about two thousand volumes, and sustained for several years an annual course of lectures, a number of them towards the last by its own members. The original members and officers of this association were nearly all apprentice boys. It exerted a most happy influence, and was not dissolved until its early members were scattered abroad, or had become too deeply involved in active business to attend to it as formerly.

His indenture expired in the spring of 1834, the period of pecuniary embarrassment which followed the struggle of the United States Bank against the government of the country. In Philadelphia, the seat of operation of the Bank, the consequent excitement and "panic" were intense. The friends of the Bank, exasperated to madness by the firm stand of the administration, and the waning fortunes of "the monster," used every effort to inflame the public mind against General Jackson and his measures. It is difficult to conceive, at this day, the feeling that prevailed. In a struggle of the money power to maintain its authority, and even the existence of its most efficient instrument, it was but natural that the most desperate measures should be resorted to. The honest convictions of a majority of the people were on one side—the interest, real or fancied, of the mercantile class, on the other. There was, therefore, developed a new phase—new in our country, at least—of the old warfare between capital and labor. In the hard hand of every unit in the masses of labor was a vote, and it was determined that capital should control those votes and use them for its own purposes. Workmen, notoriously democratic, were turned out of shops and manufactories incontinently. The most valuable workmen were at once discharged for the crime of participating in a "Jackson" meeting. The writer knew of an instance in Philadelphia at this period, in which a tailoress was refused work, because her brother had spoken at a democratic gathering. On the removal of the deposites from the United States Bank, this system of coercion was pushed to its farthest limits. Petitions for the restoration of the deposites were circulated in the factories and workshops, and those who refused to sign were marked for speedy discharge. Depression of business was the ordinary plea for such discharge; the depression being of course ascribed to the government; and the workmen were insolently told that "manufacturers could not support those that supported their enemies."

With such scenes as these, young Kelley became painfully familiar during the latter portion of his apprenticeship. Nurtured from childhood in the good old democratic faith, and loving its cause with all the intensity of an ardent and impulsive nature, he could not but be excited to vehement protest and resistance. He labored earnestly to strengthen the spirits of his democratic fellow workmen against this tyranny. Many of them dependent entirely upon their labor, and having a helpless family, were disposed to succumb. It is probable that much of his subsequent intense energy of purpose and power of vehement declamation was developed by these exciting times. In his last year of service, a town meeting was called, into which the friends of the Bank determined to introduce the popular element, by calling upon the manufacturers and master mechanics to march their men in procession to the place of assemblage. A refusal to enter the line, was of course to be the signal for discharge. Though still a minor, and an apprentice, Mr. Kelley took an

active part in resisting this attempt at petty oppression. He adroitly made his appeal to the manly sympathies of the Federalist workmen of his own branch. He implored them not to aid in this proscription of their fellows, and the appeal was successful. They resolved to abstain from the meeting, or to go to it individually, thereby vindicating their own independence in securing that of their democratic brethren.

He attained his freedom, therefore, during a season of extreme depression, which all the forms of fancy business were the first to feel, and the last to recover from. Neither had his course been such as to conciliate the favor of employers of opposite political tendencies. Failing therefore, to obtain employment in Philadelphia, he was obliged to seek it elsewhere; and in February, 1835, obtained a situation with Messrs. Clark & Curry, of Boston, where he remained about four years, pursuing his business with unremitting industry. His peculiar branch of the trade was enamelling, in which he is said to have excelled. It was a branch of the art at that time but little understood in this country, and it consequently yielded him a much greater income than other branches of the business. He appears to have pursued it with the enthusiasm of an artist, as well as the skill of a cunning workman. The writer has heard him allude to the pleasure he experienced at the satisfactory completion of a costly and highly embellished set of gold cups which were ordered from the firm for the Imaum of Muscat. In this instance, the skill of the workman obtained from the Massachusetts Mechanics' Association the award of a gold medal *to the firm that employed him.* We may be pardoned a word of digression upon the injustice of this system, for the fact in question is not without its daily parallel. In all similar associations the same mistake is made at each distribution of rewards. If they are intended to foster skill and talent, the praise should be given to the brain that plans and the hand that forms the work and not to the capital that merely furnishes the material and pockets the profits. It is hard enough to have the capitalist forever standing as middle-man between the worker and the purchaser of the work to take his lion's share of the proceeds. When, in addition to this, all the credit and encomium go to him also—the workman, unknown and unrecognised in the obscurity of his shop, has little inducement to strive for greater perfection in his art. Let us hope that a better day is at hand, when the claims of the operative shall be duly regarded in this respect, as well as in others.

During his residence in Boston Mr. Kelley was not careless of mental improvement, although he pursued his business with steady industry. He read perseveringly, and gathered around him such a choice collection of standard literature as is seldom seen in the humble apartment of a mechanic. His reading was well-selected, and an unusually retentive memory enabled him to profit by it to a greater extent than most others. Neither did his political fervor abate. His enthusiastic attachment to the great distinctive principles of American Democracy never grew cold for a moment. Much of his leisure time was devoted to political and historical reading, and the details of party organization. It was now that his peculiar talent as a public speaker was first recognized. His style may have been crude and juvenile, but it was fresh, vigorous and impetuous; and he soon became a favorite with the masses of the party. In the democratic papers of that day, his name occurs frequently, in association with those of Bancroft, Brownson, and A. H. Everett. He also commenced the cultivation of a written style with enviable success; and, even while still in the work-shop, his name appears in more than one programme of lectures, with those of Channing and Emerson.

In reference to his history while at Boston, we extract the following from an article in Elihu Burritt's Christian Citizen. It is from the pen of T. Drew, Esq., the junior editor of the Citizen, by whom it is conducted during the absence of Mr. Burritt in Europe.

"It was our good fortune, when an apprentice-boy in Boston, to enjoy the intimate companionship of this now eminent jurist and philanthropist, who was then a journeyman mechanic, devoting his days to hard manual toil, and his nights to the acquisition of knowledge. We were made a wiser and a better boy through the influence of his instruction and example; and scores of young men, who were then our companions, but who are now scattered all over the country, from Maine to Oregon, can say the same. And we rejoice, as no doubt they do, that our early friend now occupies a position, which enables him to impress the influence of his noble nature upon a whole community, and carry forward his plans for the benefit of his fellow-men, with the co-operation of the wise and good, in the commonwealth which shows its appreciation of his worth, by elevating him to one of its most important and responsible trusts."

Being persuaded by his numerous friends, as well as by his own inclination, Mr. Kelley finally resolved to abandon his calling for the study of the law, and, with that view, returned to Philadelphia. He here was entered as a student at law in the office of Col. James Page, the then postmaster, in March, 1839. He pursued his studies industriously and perseveringly, and with a success that was proved by his admission to practice as an attorney, of the several courts of the county of Philadelphia, April 17th, 1841. He entered upon the practice of his profession, and at once acquired a business that yielded him a comfortable support. His political labors, and his connection with numerous literary and philanthropic associations, gave him a very large acquaintance. Very few men, certainly, were acquainted with so many of his fellow-citizens, and all knew him in some connection creditable to himself, and calculated to inspire confidence in his manliness, integrity, and intelligence.

Even before his admission to the bar, Mr. Kelley took a warm and active part in the politics of his native state. Popular as a speaker, his influence grew stronger every day. He possesses unusual gifts as a popular orator, and his friends have sometimes regretted that the quiet duties of the bench have taken him out of the arena in which he shone so conspicuously. To a tall and vigorous frame, he unites an expressive and mobile play of features, and a voice of unusual depth and power. The writer remembers standing at the north-east gate of Washington Square, and distinctly hearing him address a day-meeting at the other end of the State House yard, notwithstanding the noises of the street. The warmth and energy of his speeches roused and attracted his auditors, so that his appearance on the stand was always loudly called for, and enthusiastically cheered. He enjoyed at this period a popularity and influence seldom attained by one of his age. When one of the newspapers of the day, in referring to his efforts to allay the public excitement, consequent on the suspension of specie payments, in 1842, spoke of him as the "tribune of the people," there may have been some extravagance in the expression, but certainly no other man in Philadelphia deserved the complement as well.

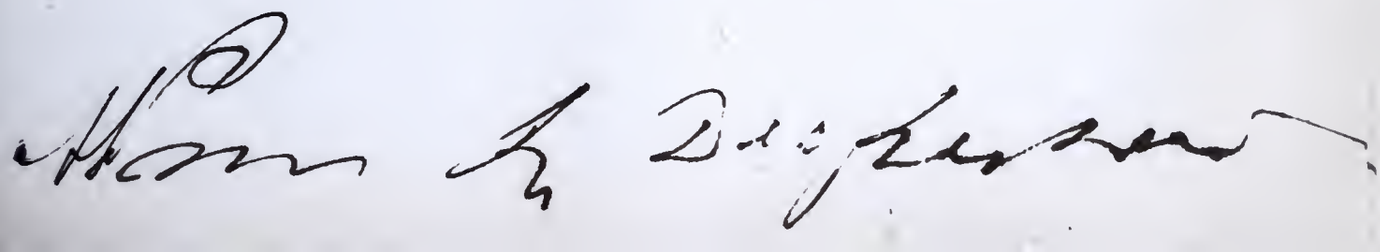
In the canvass of 1844, which resulted in the election of Mr. Polk to the Presidency, his aid was particularly efficient. The national election was preceded by a gubernatorial contest, upon which, in the then balanced state of parties in Pennsylvania, the result of the presidential contest was felt, on all sides, greatly to depend. It therefore became an object of primary im-

portance to secure the election of Francis R. Shunk, then nominated for the first time. The energies of the Democratic Party were strained to the utmost, and it was only by a small majority that it was successful, after a struggle of unusual excitement and duration. During the campaign Mr. Kelley traversed the state, a great part of the time in company with Mr. Shunk, addressing meetings in many of the eastern counties. Wherever he was heard, his practical good sense, his genuine republicanism, and his enthusiasm in the great cause for which he was battling, left a mark which assuredly remained until the ballot-boxes were counted in October. Mr. Shunk was elected, and the triumphant election of Mr. Polk soon followed, completing the great democratic victory. To the latter Mr. Kelley contributed, not only in his own state, but by his stirring appeals to the people, during a canvassing tour through a great portion of the state of New-Jersey and Delaware.

On the inauguration of Mr. Shunk, in January, 1845, he appointed the Hon. John K. Kane, Attorney-General, by whom Mr. Kelley was deputed, in conjunction with Francis Wharton, Esq., to conduct the prosecutions in the courts of the City and County of Philadelphia. To a young lawyer, hardly initiated into practice, this was a post at once of honor and responsibility; nor was the latter diminished by the important state trials arising from the riots of 1845. On the part of Mr. Kelley, as well as his colleague, these prosecutions were conducted with skill, fearlessness and energy. It is not too much to say, that the firm and capable administration of justice to which Mr. Kelley's exertions so much contributed, averted a threatened civil war. In a few weeks their exertions restored Philadelphia from the aspect of a garrisoned city to its usual peaceful appearance, and the principle offenders were within the walls of the penitentiary. In a few months more, the county of Philadelphia, out of her own treasury, and by the assessment of her own judicial tribunals, had restored the edifices:—churches not a few, and dwellings, which we trust the future historian will not too accurately count,—which had been destroyed by the frantic zeal of an armed mob.

One of the last, and, as the writer conceives, one of the most fortunate acts of Governor Shunk's administration, was the appointment of Mr. Kelley to a seat on the bench of the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia. In this court are vested, not only the usual power of a county court, but equity power of the highest character, and an exclusive criminal jurisdiction. In the discharge of the important trust thus imposed upon him, Judge Kelley has united to the industry and capacity that have always characterized him, a sound appreciation of the moral wants of the community, and an untiring energy and boldness in the exercise of his judicial functions. His decisions have been stamped not only by clearness of perception and vigor of reasoning, but by a general and profound acquaintance with the literature of his profession, for which even his friends had scarcely given him credit. Since his elevation to the bench, his connection with party organization has of course ceased; and his course on various occasions, shows that he is too pure and honest to allow the zeal of the partizan to sully the judicial ermine. Still, his devotion to the cardinal doctrines of a radical and progressive democracy remains unimpaired.

His judicial position, however, has not taken from Judge Kelley his inte-



rest in public movements of a general character. In all that concerns the elevation of the laboring community, and the development of the rich resources of his native state, his interest is deep and abiding. To his eloquent appeals, in conjunction with those of the eminent men by whom the Central Pennsylvania Rail-road was projected, is, in a great measure, due the completion of that gigantic enterprise. To his exertions, in connection with those of Bishop Potter, and a few friends of education, is to be ascribed the establishment of public night-schools in Philadelphia, for those whose daily employment would otherwise cut them off from all means of instruction. This project was an onward step in the diffusion of the blessings of education of a most important character. By it, the means of instruction are brought within the reach of the youth whose days are spent in the workshop or the brick-yard, and whose evenings heretofore had been too generally passed at the street corners. Prior to his elevation to the bench, he distinguished himself by the ability with which he advocated the abolition of capital punishment; and, while he has never hesitated in the performance of his duty to the state, both as prosecuting officer and criminal judge, he still expresses his conviction, that the interest of society demand the absolute repeal of all laws inflicting the punishment of death.

Although his reputation has been mainly that of a politician and orator, he is far from deficient in ability as a writer. His style is clear, terse and compressed, and his thoughts eminently rational and practical. An address before the democrats on the 4th of July, 1841, a lecture on the philosophy of history, and one on education, are among his printed productions. The address delivered at the opening of the House of Refuge for colored juvenile delinquents at Philadelphia, published by the managers of the institution, is a fair specimen of his style, both of thinking and writing. In it, his perspicuous reasoning, concise style and warm philanthropy, alike appear. Take, for example, the following extracts. He had been speaking of the amelioration in criminal jurisprudence, and the importance of education, and of the cultivation of refined tastes, as preventives of crimes:

"In this field, Pennsylvania was emphatically the pioneer. Her statesmen were the first to recognise in the convict a brother and co-heir of heaven, and to embody in the penal system of a great commonwealth the sublime morality of the Gospel. While they protected society by the safe seclusion of the offender, they endeavored to make his seclusion compatible with self-respect and hope for the future. Separating the convict from his companions in crime, they provided him with instruction in some available trade or calling, that, when he again entered the busy world, he should possess, indefeasibly, the means of gaining an honest livelihood. Beholding in him a man, they desired to make him a law unto himself, to quicken and develop his intellect, arouse his moral sentiments, and impress and ennoble him by the power and beauty of holiness. Supplanting the whipping-post by the moral instructor, they made room for an extensive library by removing the rows of muskets, which, holding the felon in check, had silently taught him that force was society's only law; and, having restrained him from association with the vicious and degraded, they invited the wise and good to visit his lonely cell, and strengthen him in the maintenance of good resolves by their counsel and encouragement. Knowing the value of habits of industry, and the coldness and suspicion the discharged convict must encounter, they gave him an interest in the results of his labor as a substantial and appreciable evidence of their desire to restore him to the unrestrained enjoyment of the legitimate pleasures of life. Henceforth, leaving vengeance to Him to whom it belongs, society was to protect itself, not by punishing, but by reforming, the criminal. Bars

and bolts were still to restrain him; but, meanwhile, loving sympathy was to strive to soften his indurated heart, wisdom to enlighten his darkened mind, and religion to awaken his dormant soul."

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"Many of these apprentices are worthy farmers' sons. The father's well-tilled farm will support the family; but is too small to be again divided. The son must, therefore, carve out his own fortune. He is now a well-grown boy, and, having enjoyed the example of his father's temperance and industry, the care and counsel of his fond mother, and such slender means of education as the wayside school affords, he turns his steps towards the city, as the field of widest and most varied enterprise. His object is the acquisition of a trade, by which he may gain an honest and independent livelihood. When his heart swells with recollections of home, he turns to the future, and thinks of the happy time to come, when, as a successful master-workman, his roof shall shelter, and his means maintain his aged parents. Finding employment, he enters on his apprenticeship. In his master he also finds a friend. Their contract, however, is a mere bargain, from which both parties expect advantage. The boy binds himself to give years of willing and obedient labor as the consideration for food, clothing, and instruction in the art and mystery of the calling of his choice. The master—a kind-hearted man and good mechanic—is cheered in his toil by the hope of making something more than a bare living for the little family with which God has blessed him. His home is in a respectable neighborhood. Embellished by few luxuries, it is well supplied with the means of substantial comfort. The snug parlor, darkened at other times, is open to the family on Sunday, or when a few friends visit the master's thrifty helpmate. In the rear of the parlor is the little dining-room, warmed by the kitchen stove, around which the family gathers in the evening for the gossip of the day and neighborhood. In the attic is the boy's clean and well-made bed. The little room, though well finished, is without grate or fireplace. To warm it through the long evenings of the winter, when books or intercourse with young companions might engage him, would involve the master in the purchase of a stove, fuel, and lights; a serious item of expenditure, which the custom of the trade would not sanction, and the exigencies of the case do not require; indeed, the boy does not expect it. He knows that he enjoys more comforts than most of his class, and is grateful for them. He cannot, however, let his love of quiet and study, be keen as it may, confine himself in his cold chamber through the long winter evenings. True, he is not denied—nay, he is sometimes welcomed—to a place in the 'sitting-room.' He need not, however, attempt to read there; nor can he join as equal participant in the conversation. Feeling restraint from the presence of the heads of the family, he soon discovers that he, too, is a restraint on them. His acquaintances in the city are few, and remembering the oft-repeated admonitions of his mother against evil company, he is indisposed to increase their number; but he goes forth to escape the irksomeness of home. And where does he go? To visit friends in the bosom of a virtuous and intelligent family? Alas, he is a stranger! He goes, however, where society in its wisdom and goodness invites him—to the street corner, the hose or engine house, the beer shop, or the bar-room—and if he go not speedily thence to worse places. But I need not follow him. Were he a son of yours, your fears would indicate the thousand dangers that surround him."

His address on the "Characteristics of the Age," before the Linnæan Society of Pennsylvania College, Gettysburg, breathes the same noble spirit. We will detain the reader with but brief extracts:

"I would not disparage the value of the 'little learning' which enables a man to read and write his mother tongue with facility. When 'commerce is king,' the ability to do this is little less than essential to the physical well-being of the citizen. Under such government the receipt-book peaceably enough performs a large share of the functions of the embattled wall and armed retainers of the days when force was law. But to rise above the commercial value of these slender attainments, he who can read the language of Shakspeare and Milton, Johnson and Addison, Shelley and Wordsworth, has the key to the collected wisdom of his race. The farms around his workshop, the property of others, present to his view a landscape which is his, and to him belongs every airy nothing to which poet ever gave habitation or name. The

sages of the most remote past obey his call as counsellors and friends. And in the company of prophet and apostle he may approach the presence of the Most High. The value of such a gift is inestimable. Wisdom and justice would make it the certain heritage of every child born in the commonwealth.

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"The spirit of commerce is essentially selfish. Voyages are projected for profit. The merchant, whose liberal gifts surprise the world, chaffers in his bargains. Not for a man as a family of brethren, therefore, are the blessings of this age. They are the gifts of a common father, but they come not, like light and dew, insensibly to all. They mark the achievements of our race, and manifest the master-spirit of the age, but hitherto they have been felt but slightly by the masses of mankind. Wealth increases; but its aggregation into few hands takes place with ever-growing rapidity. The comforts of life abound; but when the markets of the world are glutted, hunger is in the home of the artisan. Over-production causes the legitimate effects of famine. The ingenuity of political economists is vainly taxed for the means of preventing the accumulation of surplus material and fabrics. And while warehouse and granary groan with repletion, heartless theory points to the laboring population reduced to want and pauperism, and with dogmatic emphasis, inquires if the increase of population cannot be legally restrained? The state of the market shows that there are more men than commerce requires, and a just system of economy would adapt the supply to the demand!

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"Ancient philosophy did not recognize utility as an aim. It contemned, as mechanical and degrading, the discovery or invention that improved man's physical condition. Socrates invented no steam-engine or spinning-jenny. The soul was his constant study. Regardless of his own estate, he cared not for the material comfort of others. Indifferent to the world himself, he sought to raise his disciples above it. A disputatious idler and a scoffer at utility, he fashioned Plato and swayed the world for centuries. Our philosophy comes from Bacon. It only deals with the wants of man and uses of nature. The body is the object of its solicitude. Earth is the field of its hopes. Time bounds its horizon. Fruit, material fruit—the multiplication of the means of temporal enjoyment—was the end Lord Bacon had in view, when, denouncing the schools, he gave his theories to the world. Time and experience have vindicated his methods. But have they not also shown, that a system which offers no sanctions to virtue and no restraints to vice, whose only instruments are the senses, and whose only subject is material law, may impart to a world the vices which made the wisest also the meanest of mankind."

These details sufficiently indicate that the elevation of Judge Kelley to his present position is not due to fortuitous circumstances, but that he has worked it out for himself, by his own inherent capacity and indomitable energy. Still young, and in the flush of bodily and mental vigor, he has before him, in all human probability, a long career of honor and usefulness. May he for many years continue to enjoy the sunshine of prosperity that has always heretofore so deservedly beamed upon his path; and may many a meritorious youth, under the clouds of poverty and adversity, look upon his example, and draw strength and comfort from its view!